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FROM: Kika de la Garza

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- America means freedom.

That is the theme of the winning essay in the contest I sponsored this spring for high school students in the 15th Congressional District on the subject "What America Means to Me".

Author of the winning essay, by vote of the distinguished panel of judges, is a ninth grade student in McAllen -- Miss Denise Prihoda, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence H. Prihoda. Her essay was chosen out of the many excellent papers submitted on the basis of originality of thought and eloquence of expression.

The prize I offered was a \$50 U. S. Savings Bond. It was presented to Denise by Mr. Jesse Trevino, president of the McAllen School Board. My hearty congratulations to her! Any my thanks to Denise and to all other young South Texans who submitted essays.

The response of our high school students was so gratifying that I am planning to sponsor some such contest annually. I feel deeply that we should encourage our fine young people to give full expression to their patriotic feeling about our great country.

Denise's essay is presented below.

WHAT AMERICA MEANS TO ME

By Denise Prihoda

To me America is a many-charactered nation. It has such a great variety of meanings that it is hard to express them all in words. But they can clearly be seen in the face of each and every American citizen.

America is a land of liberty. It is where our forefathers died for what they believed so that we could live in a free country. It is where the Negro slave fought to be emancipated. It is where the Negro today is still fighting against the many prejudices that seem to block his way. America is where Communists are planting and cultivating seeds of destruction while American soldiers are fighting to destroy the weeds already growing in Asia. Women's Lib is America, for equal rights are for all people no matter what race, creed, color, or sex.

America is a land of opportunity. It is the black boy in the ghetto who goes to college and becomes a doctor. It is the high school dropout who attends night classes and gets a solid job. America is a migrant from Cuba who came to escape and find a new life.

America is a land of hope. It is the blind who can't see, the deaf who can't hear, the dumb who can't speak yet find job opportunities. It is the disabled who are taught a trade so that they, too, can find their place in the world. America is

the incurable waiting around until someone finds a cure. It is the sick who get a new heart or a new kidney. It is the alcoholic, the cigarette smoker, the drug addict who kick the habit.

America is a land of freedom. Here we can speak out against injustices and give our opinions. It is the freedom to print, buy and read what one wants. It is the freedom to see any movies rated from G to X. It is the man refusing to serve his country by burning his draft card. It is the freedom to move to a new town and a new job. It is the freedom to vote for the person you think is right for the office. It is the freedom to drive on one of the super highways that crisscross the nation or fly in a new jet plane. America is the freedom to close your door, your eyes, and ears and not become involved. It is the freedom to live and think like an individual and not be a carbon copy of the person down the block or at the office.

America is a lot of things to me. It is all of these and many others. But most of all, what America means to me is -- my home.

* * *

VISITORS -- Visiting my office this week were Mr. Dan Hawkins, of Brownsville; David W. Flory, M.D., of Harlingen; Mr. Domingo Rodriguez, of Los Indios; Mr. Santiago Zamora, of Lyford; Miss Carla Conley, and Miss Shan Pickard, both of Raymondville; and Mr. Victor Flores and Mr. William Glen, both of San Benito.

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